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ABSTRACT

Service integration is a public policy strategy that brings together many services for highly disadvantaged persons, refashions the delivery of those services to meet individual needs, and increases the possibility of long-term success. Literacy training is an appropriate centerpiece for service integration because it contributes to the long-term self-sufficiency of individuals and families, thus meeting the strategy's central objective. Two service integration models that employ literacy training in a central role involve skills training and employment preparation and the development of parenting and child development skills. Service integration designed around literacy training can contribute to the following: (1) increased understanding of literacy issues among human service providers; (2) informal literacy training in many service contexts; (3) new opportunities to ground literacy instruction in real life applications; and (4) improvements in the capacity of human service agencies to serve persons who have previously failed to achieve literacy goals. Barriers to service integration include the following: the categorical structure underlying authorizations of public funds for literacy training and related services; a lack of experience and training on the part of literacy professionals to create and administer the necessary programmatic arrangements; and the need for extensive planning and ongoing collaboration at many levels of the participating organizations. (Contains 19 references.) (Author/YLB)

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NATIONAL CENTER ON ADULT LITERACY

ADULT LITERACY TRAINING AND THE INTEGRATION OF HUMAN SERVICES

Elizabeth R. Reisner
Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

TECHNICAL REPORT TR93-16
DECEMBER 1993

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ADULT LITERACY TRAINING AND THE INTEGRATION OF HUMAN SERVICES

Elizabeth R. Reisner
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Abstract

Service integration is a public policy strategy that brings together many services for highly disadvantaged persons, refashions the delivery of those services to meet individual needs, and thereby increases the possibility of long-term success. Literacy training is an appropriate centerpiece for service integration because it contributes to the long-term self-sufficiency of individuals and families, thus meeting the strategy's central objective. Two service integration models that employ literacy training in a central role involve skills training and employment preparation and the development of parenting and child development skills. Service integration designed around literacy training can contribute to (a) increased understanding of literacy issues among human service providers, (b) informal literacy training in many service contexts, (c) new opportunities to ground literacy instruction in real life applications, and (d) improvements in the capacity of human service agencies to serve persons who have previously failed to achieve literacy goals.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, policymakers, human service providers, and analysts have breathed new life into the old idea that human services for individuals and families with multiple needs can be most effective when they are tailored to the recipients' special circumstances and are based on extensive collaboration among public and private providers. This paper explores approaches to service integration in the specific context of literacy training for adults. As the following discussion indicates, the combination of literacy instruction with human service integration offers important possibilities for enriching both endeavors and thus improving the lives of disadvantaged individuals and families.

Despite its obvious appeal, the notion of combining adult literacy instruction with an integrated program of human services has not yet been explored through systematic research. Most service providers want to understand the possible problems and opportunities associated with this combination before they undertake large-scale implementation of programs that use literacy training as the focus of service integration. The discussion presented here is intended to raise issues to be explored more fully through systematic inquiry.

This paper examines the potential connections between service integration and literacy training and outlines the rationale for service integration. Two models for integrating multiple services around a core of literacy instruction are described. Subsequent sections summarize the benefits of integrated service delivery for literacy training and discuss the barriers that integrated programs must overcome. The paper concludes with a research agenda to examine the potential of the integrated service approach in assisting persons with multiple needs, including literacy improvement.

A. Relevance of Service Integration to Adult Literacy Training

Many different measures indicate that adults who are illiterate or who have low literacy skills are likely to have additional problems and needs, some of which may present even greater challenges than illiteracy itself (e.g., see Hodgkinson, 1989, for a review of interrelated need factors in disadvantaged American families). Such problems may include poverty, unemployment, poor health, and substance abuse. Some problems may be the direct result of illiteracy, such as those experienced by an unskilled laborer who cannot follow written instructions for operating a new piece of equipment and loses her job. Other problems may be indirectly related to illiteracy, such as the health problems of an older person who cannot control his high blood pressure because he is unable to read nutritional information on food labels and dosage instructions on medicine containers. In both cases, illiteracy can set in motion a series of events that lead to personal hardship and, in some cases, dependence on others.

As difficult as their problems may be, illiterate adults are not the only ones who suffer; their children experience deprivation as well. Children who do not experience shared reading activities at home miss out on an important source of motivation for learning. As Schorr (1988) pointed out, children in such families are also more likely than other children to experience poverty resulting from parental unemployment or underemployment. They are more likely to have academic problems in school, attend school sporadically, be retained in grade, and drop out.

Although illiteracy may be a major cause of an adult's inability to obtain and hold a good job or to participate in employment training, literacy skills may not be perceived as the most immediate of an individual's needs. Indeed, an adult who is reluctant to seek help in addressing a literacy problem may be much more willing to look for aid in coping with a condition directly related to survival (e.g., a need for food, housing, health care, or child support). American-born illiterate adults have almost certainly tried to learn to read at some point in their lives, and their failure may have left scars that discourage them from trying again or even from admitting their need for literacy training.

An increasing body of evidence suggests that the best approach to assisting individuals with a wide range of needs, including literacy, is through comprehensive, integrated services tailored to the individual and family. However, the integration of services requires extensive collaboration among service providers and, in many cases, new relationships between providers and service recipients.

Integrated service delivery holds the promise of addressing long-term impediments to self-sufficiency rather than short-term problems alone, as the existing social service system is prone to do. However, the importance of addressing immediate needs is not ignored under the integrated service approach. By incorporating the capacity for providing immediate help (e.g., job placement and emergency child care), integrated services can create relationships and opportunities that lead to the identification and treatment of long-term problems such as illiteracy. Responses to acute needs can thus be parlayed into comprehensive, prevention-oriented assistance that leads to long-term success.

A good analogy is the community health clinic, which provides acute medical care for colds and simple injuries in order to attract individuals and families to long-term disease prevention services (e.g., prenatal care and health screenings). The short-term help may be what the service recipient wants immediately, but the long-term, prevention-oriented help is more likely to produce significant, lasting improvement.

B. Service Integration Can Improve Human Services and Literacy Training

Efforts to integrate human services are generally based on a conception of the human service system in an ideal world. The following scenario is based on such a conception:

An individual or family in need of help meets at a convenient location with a knowledgeable professional. Together they determine what types of help or intervention are needed to permit the person or family to function independently. The selection of services involves consideration of (a) realistic goals for the assistance, (b) the desired duration and intensity of services, and (c) the responsibilities of the family or individual in return for help. In making decisions about services, a high priority is placed on identifying and addressing underlying needs.

The service mix may include many forms of help or only a few. Services may be contingent on the recipient meeting certain obligations. For example, free child care may be provided on the condition that the mother participates in employment training. Also, the help may extend beyond the traditional human service system. For example, the professional may intervene with a child's teacher or the family's landlord in order to make a special request on behalf of the family.

Once the service recipient has reached an agreed-upon level of independent functioning, publicly supported services taper off. As needed, a minimal level of counseling or advisory support continues for a longer period.

Unfortunately, in the real world of human services and people with problems, the system does not operate as smoothly as the above scenario. There is rarely a professional guide to help a family or individual step back, assess overall needs, and design a plan to address them. Indeed, each service professional with whom a family or individual interacts may have only a narrow vision of how to help, in part because each has a different background of professional training and experience. Staff who are graduates of schools of social work, for example, rarely talk to their counterparts from schools of education or public health. Because of the narrow scope of their training, social service professionals from different

disciplines are likely to employ different assumptions and terminology in their contacts with clients.

Even service professionals who have a broad vision of the help a client needs are likely to be able to mobilize only a narrow range of services. The categorical focus of most federal and state assistance programs means that every source of public aid has its own rules for participant eligibility, agency administration, and recipient accountability. At a practical level, these conditions result in a lack of communication, and sometimes even understanding, across service areas. A family whose problems are immediate must almost always complete a different application form for each type of assistance that it seeks—health care, subsidized food, employment training, welfare aid, and so forth. Furthermore, the family must follow different procedures to maintain continued eligibility. The problem of social service fragmentation was documented by Chang, Gardner, Watahara, Brown, and Robles (1991) in their study of state and county efforts to foster collaboration in California. In another study, Golden (1992) examined social service fragmentation in the context of needed changes in the welfare system.

The result of service fragmentation is that individuals and families in need confront a highly disjointed human service system, and at no point are they assisted in looking at their overall situation. Typically, services are not provided on a priority basis; rather, clients receive the services that can actually be arranged and in standard amounts that may be more or less than they truly require. Individuals or families with moderate needs may be able to navigate successfully through the maze, find the help they need, use it, and begin to function independently. However, those with the most serious needs are unlikely to fare as well.

Service integration can help to solve the problems of fragmentation and short-term vision. Over the last few years, several scholars and practitioners have reviewed the theory and practice of service integration. One report that has helped to frame the current policy debate is that of Edelman and Radin (1991), who examined the history of service integration in terms of earlier efforts such as settlement houses, the community action program, model cities, multiservice centers, and little city halls. Halpern (1991) used an historical perspective to examine neighborhood-based services and the increasing challenge of fragmentation in the social service system. Kusserow (1991) also provided an historical overview of service integration efforts, primarily from the perspective of federal policy.

More recent efforts are reviewed in two studies. Kahn and Kamerman (1992) categorized recent integration activities as either administrative restructuring efforts or case-oriented strategies at the service level. Marzke, Chimerine, Morrill, and Marks (1992) explored this distinction in depth, drawing on current examples of service integration from sites across the country. Both studies indicate that when integration focuses mainly on program governance, it targets change in program structures, in an agency's overall mission, program funding streams, and administrative procedures. In these instances, structural change at the policy or governance level—for example, to focus on families as units rather than individuals in isolation—is intended to drive reform at the delivery level.

An example of structural change is the agency-level collaboration in the provision of comprehensive services to handicapped infants and toddlers mandated under Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A central strategy for achieving this collaboration is the requirement that each state governor designate a lead agency to coordinate the services of public health programs, health financing agencies, special education programs, and social service providers on behalf of handicapped infants and toddlers. While local service providers may have welcomed the policy change (and may even have lobbied for it), it was the law itself that sparked the integration, whatever cooperation and enthusiasm may have existed at the local level.

In contrast, integration generated at the service delivery level is likely to grow out of the commitment and skill of service providers, and in some cases, recipients. When the impetus for change comes directly from the professionals and service recipients, the involved parties tend to be highly motivated to develop solutions to problems that impede active collaboration. However, they are unlikely to be able to resolve structural problems, such as different program requirements for participant eligibility, confidentiality, and accountability. If not resolved, such problems can prevent the systemic change that would permit true integration.

Despite their differences, the two paths to change share a holistic vision of families' long-term needs, interagency collaboration, crisis prevention, and family preservation. These emphases contrast with the typical social service orientation of crisis intervention and short-term relief. The differences between short- and long-term views in the provision of social services are highlighted in a report by Mattessich and Monsey (1992), who reviewed factors present in successful social service collaboration.

Literacy training services are consistent with the long-term view of service integration, since literacy is an essential tool for empowering people to improve their lives and those of their family members. Because it contributes to both crisis prevention and family preservation, literacy training can serve as an important focal point for service integration, and it is appropriate whether the integration is driven from the top down or the bottom up.

C. Models for Integrating Multiple Services Around Literacy Training

Two models of human service integration built around literacy training are sketched below. While literacy training is the central element of both models, each has a specific goal that drives the development of program components: the goal of Model A is skill training and employment; the goal of Model B is effective parenting and child development. Sharp boundaries are drawn between the models in order to differentiate them for review. In actual practice, however, programs could blend elements of both or of other additional models.

1. Model A: Literacy Training in Support of Skill Training and Employment

Under Model A, literacy training is delivered in a program focused on assisting the individual in preparation for employment, especially in jobs that provide advancement opportunities, career ladders, and fringe benefits. The model is based on realistic assumptions about the characteristics of persons who have poor literacy skills and are unemployed, as well as on the premise that service recipients have a range of social service needs. For example, they may have neither health insurance nor adequate income to pay for health care, or they may have health-related problems that have limited their capacity for employment. Parents may need child care to permit them to obtain training, look for work outside the home, and hold down a job. Indeed, a family's needs may actually increase during the training period if the trainee must forgo income from some other source while learning new skills for a good job.

The experiences of employment training providers and recipients over the past two decades indicate that job training can provide an effective context for literacy training. Literacy development is strengthened through supplementary instruction and practice in using literacy skills to find and keep a job. Therefore, the participant can immediately put new skills to work on specific, employment-related tasks. A special benefit of the model is the extra motivation that accompanies learning a skill, such as literacy, that is needed to achieve a highly valued objective, such as obtaining a good job.

A. SPONSORSHIP AND SETTING

Likely sponsors for services built around Model A include local human resource agencies and community-based organizations that provide employment training under authorities such as the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). These providers may use the facilities of a community college or vocational training institution. Under an increasingly popular arrangement, large employers sponsor training using their own facilities.

Sponsorship may also involve a state human service agency that works with recipients under the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program or a comparable authority to assist welfare recipients in moving toward permanent employment and financial independence. Hagen and Lurie (1992) discussed how JOBS programs involve educational services, including literacy training.

B. SERVICE DELIVERY

Fortunately, information is available about effective approaches for blending instruction in literacy skills with employment-related training. Grover, Seager, and deVries (1990), for example, reviewed research on workplace literacy. In general, experience in employment training arenas suggests the value of instruction in which literacy skills are linked directly to skills and knowledge that are needed on the job. Thus, if a restaurant job requires the worker to read and follow a recipe, the literacy instruction should focus on terminology and comprehension strategies that are appropriate for recipes. Likewise, if a procedures manual is the central guide in a job for which the individual is training, the manual should become the main curricular resource.

Experience also suggests that the sequencing of instruction is important. Burghardt and Gordon (1990) addressed this issue in their large study. In particular, literacy instruction seems to be most effective when it is delivered concurrently with training in vocational and job-search skills. This concurrent approach creates opportunities for learners to use their developing skills in employment-related contexts, thus reinforcing the value of the learners' hard work.

With employment as the ultimate goal, other services can be designed to maximize participants' readiness for work. One way to facilitate such services is to use job trainers or placement specialists to assess and diagnose participants' needs in areas other than employment. Although this strategy can be fruitful on a small scale, it may not be feasible when there are large numbers of participants or when their problems are numerous and severe.

An alternate strategy is to employ trained case managers to assess needs and to orchestrate and follow up on services provided. In a recent report, the American Public Welfare Association (1992) described current practices in the use of case management under the JOBS program. The study was based on a national survey of state and local JOBS administrators and other welfare administrators.

Whatever the staffing arrangement, critical factors in achieving success include treating participants as individuals, addressing their problems holistically, and emphasizing problem prevention and personal independence. These priorities dictate that literacy be a central goal of any training and assistance program serving individuals with weak literacy skills.

C. PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Participants are likely to be either unemployed or underemployed as part-time, hourly workers in unskilled positions with no job security. Participants enrolled in certain JTPA-funded training activities must have qualified as eligible under that authority's low-income criteria and may be required to meet other entry criteria as well. Even so, their needs may not be as great as those of participants under other models, since they are likely to have both the capacity and motivation for paid employment. According to information on those served by programs of the U.S. Department of Labor (Kirsch, Jungeblut, & Campbell, 1992), the overall pool of job seekers includes large numbers of persons with low literacy levels. This suggests that the number of persons who could derive benefits from Model A is high.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Governance and procedural specifications under Model A are likely to be dictated to some degree by the sponsor and financial underwriter. For example, a JTPA project must conform to eligibility and reporting requirements, and these will determine the types of information needed from participants both before and after services are provided. Moreover, requirements may directly or indirectly affect decisions about who is recruited and admitted into the program, especially if funding provisions encourage recruitment of individuals who are likely to require only a brief training period in order to obtain and hold a job.

Recruitment must rely on information strategies that can reach a population characterized by low literacy skills and also by potential interest in employment preparation and/or training. Effective recruitment strategies can involve community institutions

such as churches, community centers, and neighborhood associations. Local radio stations can also provide access to persons able to benefit from these services.

Program governance presents a special challenge. Because service integration necessarily involves many agencies that may not be accustomed to working together, each agency will almost certainly seek a clear role in governance. The challenge for program leaders is to streamline these arrangements as much as possible, while maintaining the full commitment and participation of the public and private organizations involved.

Governance also needs to involve service recipients in meaningful roles in order to ensure that services are meeting their real needs. This may mean participant involvement in administrative councils as well as opportunities for participant feedback on program quality and relevance.

2. Model B: Literacy Training in Support of Effective Parenting and Child Development

Model B is oriented toward expanding the quality and variety of parent-child interactions, with a special focus on improving developmental opportunities for young children as well as improving their readiness for school (see Goodson, Swartz, & Millsap, 1991, for a review of effective intergenerational learning strategies). Literacy training serves as the central activity within a broad network of services and opportunities that may include health screenings and treatment, housing assistance, day care, and counseling as well as other services. Bruder, Deiner, and Sachs (1990) reviewed models of service integration built around services to young children and their families. Melaville and Blank (1991) also examined broad approaches to interagency collaborations that were intended to connect children and families with comprehensive services. In comparison with services under Model A, programs under Model B are likely to be more nurturing and child centered and less job oriented.

A. Sponsorship and Setting

Head Start, whose broad purpose is to support the healthy intellectual, physical, and psychological development of preschool children, sponsors local projects across the country that exhibit the program features of Model B. A newer and smaller federal program, Even Start, targets disadvantaged parents of young children and delivers family education activities that are aimed at improving parents' skills in areas such as literacy, English language proficiency, and parenting.

Programs implementing Model B do not need costly equipment to operate, and they are likely to be situated in the neighborhoods where participants live. They can be located in schools, community centers, libraries, churches, housing projects, or storefronts leased by community agencies or community-based organizations. Convenience of location also makes it easier for participants with small children to attend.

B. SERVICE DELIVERY

Literacy instruction under Model B is most likely to focus on developing the oral reading skills that will enable participants to read at home to their children or grandchildren. Instruction may also involve teaching adults how to help their children and grandchildren with their homework.

Projects under Model B would be expected to provide instruction in child development—including physical and intellectual maturation as well as strategies for encouraging healthy development, intellectual curiosity, and readiness for school. Projects may find a lack of interest in such instruction on the part of parents who are satisfied with their peer group's traditional child-rearing practices and thus see no need to learn new ways of fostering their children's development (McCollum & Russo, 1992). Programs can deal with this problem by integrating child development instruction with activities that are valued more highly by participants, such as literacy training or English-as-a-Second-Language instruction.

Family-focused programs provide time for adults and children to come together as part of the learning group. Among other benefits, these programs provide informal settings for program staff to demonstrate effective adult-child interactions.

Other services generally aim to facilitate children's development and improve the functioning of families. However, the latter objective may involve services that are not directly related to children such as referrals to employment training and housing assistance.

Projects may also act in essentially opportunistic ways to develop services that will enhance participation. For example, projects can conduct door-to-door assessments of neighborhood needs in order to find out what services are desired by members of the community. By providing such services (e.g., legal assistance or GED preparation)—even if they are fairly far afield from the project's central purpose—the project may be able to attract persons who can benefit from its primary services.

C. PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Projects under Model B are most likely to involve mothers, grandmothers, and young children, although fathers may be enthusiastic participants as well (Goodson et al., 1991; McCollum & Russo, 1992). Projects affiliated with Head Start or Even Start must conform to those programs' low-income eligibility criteria. Participants are likely to have varied literacy levels and will include those who have some functional literacy but lack fluency in reading orally or in reading their children's textbooks.

Projects serving parents with limited proficiency in English face special challenges (McCollum & Russo, 1992). In particular, these parents may be so eager to achieve fluency and literacy in English that they are reluctant to devote time to the child-oriented portions of the curriculum.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

As in Model A, administration of Model B programs will be driven to some extent by the requirements of program sponsors and financial underwriters. This applies, in particular, to projects affiliated with Head Start and Even Start that must conform to those programs' rules in areas such as staffing, facilities, and participant selection.

Outreach efforts can be channeled through staff-parent contacts in service sites such as preschool programs and pediatric health care facilities. Because this type of outreach does not provide contact with families outside the traditional human service system, it may need to be supplemented with contacts through media such as radio.

One governance problem that programs may encounter is the desire of highly motivated participants to exclude others whom they believe to be disruptive or uninterested in achieving the program's learning goals. Such a reaction can present a particular dilemma if the program staff are trying to inspire and help parents with severe problems such as drug or alcohol abuse. Strategies for resolving the problem may involve enlisting participants to work directly with their disruptive peers to modify their behavior enough to participate successfully in a learning group.

D. Benefits of an Integrated Service Approach to Literacy Training

Offering literacy training as a central component of service integration opens up a range of opportunities. The most important appears to be the opportunity to bring disparate services to disadvantaged persons in a holistic, coordinated fashion. Other important benefits are included.

- *Increased understanding of literacy issues on the part of providers of health and social services.* Service integration that involves literacy training can educate human service professionals in important ways. For example, it can teach them how to identify service recipients who need literacy training, a nontrivial task since illiterate persons may have years of experience in disguising their lack of literacy skills.
- *Opportunities for informal literacy training in program contexts other than the classroom.* Through collaboration with literacy trainers, other service professionals can learn how to integrate informal literacy activities into their interactions with service recipients.
- *The grounding of literacy instruction in a variety of real life contexts and applications.* Like many other skills, literacy is most effectively achieved when it is used to reach a practical and valued objective. The strategy of integrating literacy instruction with other services can facilitate literacy development, particularly of those literacy skills that are most important to the learner—for example, the skills needed to obtain and keep a job or to promote children's development.
- *The potential to attract persons who have previously failed in their efforts to achieve literacy goals.* A central challenge of literacy instruction is to build confidence and motivation to try again in persons who have tried and failed to achieve literacy in the past. Approaching the task

indirectly through a focus on some other valued goal, such as becoming a more effective parent, may make it easier for learners to summon the determination to persevere in a difficult task.

E. BARRIERS TO AN INTEGRATED SERVICE APPROACH

Service integration has been sought in many contexts but achieved only rarely. Unfortunately, there are powerful barriers that account for the failure of the human service system to achieve the desired levels of integration. The barriers most likely to constrain the types of service models described above include the following:

- *The categorical structure underlying authorizations of public funds for literacy training and related services.* With a few notable exceptions, restrictions placed on publicly funded programs tend to promote discrete operations in which the flow of money can be clearly tracked and client outcomes can be readily counted and compared. Almost by definition, integrated services must combine funds from different authorities. Because services are tailored to individual needs under service integration, client outcomes are more difficult to track and measure. Although accountability mechanisms can be implemented in such environments, they may not be perfectly compatible with underwriters' pre-existing requirements.
- *A lack of experience and training on the part of literacy professionals to create and administer the necessary programmatic arrangements.* Successful service integration requires professionals with cross-disciplinary training and a holistic orientation toward individual development and family preservation. Moreover, the planning and collaboration required by service integration necessitate training and experience in organizational management, negotiation, and problem solving. Due to their narrow training, most literacy education professionals are likely to be poorly equipped to design and operate the types of integrated programs described here.

- *The need for extensive planning and ongoing collaboration at many levels of the participating organizations.* Because service integration requires entire agencies to change the way they relate to clients and organizations, the agencies may need to change the way they operate internally, the way they interact with other agencies and organizations, and the way they serve clients. Such changes are never easy and require support from the top of the organization in order to be possible at all.

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CONCLUSION: AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH

As the preceding discussion suggests, the large-scale adoption of integrated formats for the delivery of literacy training warrants serious consideration, even though important issues are not likely to be easily or quickly resolved. A number of questions must be answered to determine the conditions that can maximize the effectiveness of literacy training that is provided within the context of service integration.

- How is this focus on self-sufficiency for individuals and families and preservation of the family unit most effectively fostered in programs centered on literacy training? What program components are most supportive?
- What other human services are most compatible with literacy training? Which are least compatible?
- What types of training provide the best professional preparation for developing and administering integrated service programs that use literacy instruction as their centerpiece?
- Do service recipients derive greater benefits from participation when they are involved in the planning and administration of project activities? What circumstances make participant involvement in planning and administration most effective?
- What curricular approaches to literacy training are most likely to maximize the effectiveness of integrated service programs built around objectives such as skill development and employment and effective parenting and child development?
- What other service integration models (e.g., literacy training and services to prevent homelessness) warrant special review?
- How can information on effective strategies be successfully disseminated to service providers?
- How can service integration involving literacy instruction be structured to use the financial

resources available under existing federal and state programs?

These questions could be answered through a series of case studies that would examine service integration initiatives in which literacy training plays a central role. The research would involve the selection of diverse study sites and the development of data collection procedures that would ensure comparability of information across sites. The design would permit the preparation of case studies and cross-site analyses to explore commonalties and differences and to identify practices holding substantial promise for improving the lives of disadvantaged persons with serious literacy needs.

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